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DEX

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223/09 GPS

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PAGES

1

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TGR: 29/6/20 2

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

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Guerrillas Freed by Sudan Reported Jailed in Egypt

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 28—The State Department said today that it had been informed that the eight Palestinian guerrillas who were convicted of killing two senior American diplomats and a Belgian in Khartoum last year were now in prison in Egypt.

Robert Anderson, the State Department spokesman, refused to provide any additional details on the fate of the eight, whose virtual release by the Sudanese Government on Monday touched off a strong American protest to the Sudan for her failure to live up to a pledge to punish the guerrillas severely.

Life sentences given the guerrillas by a Sudanese court were commuted to seven years on Monday by President Gaafar al-Nimeiry of the Sudan, who added that the guerrillas would serve their sentences in the custody of the Palestine Liberation Organization. They were flown to Cairo on Tuesday.

The American Ambassador to Egypt, Hermann F. Eilts, raised the matter with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy on Tuesday, expressing the American view that the eight

confessed murderers not be allowed to go free.

Mr. Anderson refused to report what Mr. Fahmy had told Mr. Eilts. But it was learned that the Egyptian Foreign Minister said the men were in prison as part of an arrangement between General Nimeiry and the Egyptian President, Anwar el-Sadat. It was understood that the Egyptians regarded the imprisonment as temporary, leaving open the possibility that the guerrillas might be sent to another Arab country.

The State Department, which vigorously condemned General Nimeiry's actions, has become extremely cautious in recent days in discussing the matter, for fear of upsetting the Egyp-

Continued on Page 7, Column 1

EIGHT GUERRILLAS REPORTED JAILED

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

tions.

American officials have noted that the Egyptians had to consider the reaction of both the Arab world—including the Palestinians—and the United States in deciding what to do about the guerrillas.

The Egyptians have reportedly been told by Mr. Eilts that the mood in Congress was extremely bitter about the Sudanese release of the eight guerrillas, and that if Egypt appeared to be giving the men a safe haven Congress might reject the various aid requests for Egypt made by the Administration.

In the aftermath of improved Egyptian-American relations, the Administration has asked for \$250-million in economic aid for Egypt. In addition, the two governments have begun negotiations for the sale of a nuclear reactor to Egypt for use in the nineteen-eighties.

The nuclear reactor agreement, announced during President Nixon's trip to the Middle East earlier in this month, has already stirred opposition on Capitol Hill among those afraid that the Egyptians, despite the safeguards in the accord, would convert radioactive material into nuclear weapons.

Egyptians Seen Reluctant

On the other hand, the Egyptians were said to be reluctant to appear to be punishing the guerrillas for their actions.

The eight guerrillas, who identified themselves as members of Black September, an offshoot of Al Fatah, burst into the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Khartoum on March 1, 1973, and took as hostages five diplomats who had been attending a farewell party for George C. Moore, the American chargé d'affaires who was to be succeeded by the new American Ambassador to the Sudan, Cleo A. Noel Jr.

Early in the morning of March 3, Mr. Noel and Guy Eid, the Belgian chargé d'affaires, were killed.

General Nimeiry, in a public statement after the incident, promised just punishments would be meted out to the killers. After long delays, the guerrillas went on trial recently and were sentenced on Monday to life imprisonment.

After making a protest to General Nimeiry, the American Ambassador to the Sudan, William D. Brewer, returned to Washington yesterday, for what may be an indefinite stay.